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ABSTRACT

This high school curriculum project/unit of study focuses on providing a framework of ideas for teachers interested in teaching about both the historical and current cultures and conflicts of the Middle East. While the unit is set up to include a more traditional section where both the religious and historical background of Judaism and Islam are studied, the major focus is on an introduction and culminating project which approaches the topic from a more unusual angle. The final project for this unit has students holding a "summit conference" at which the future of Jerusalem will be decided. The unit's aim is to engage students in a project that deals with real-world issues by asking them to work as active learners and problem solvers. The unit, envisioned in three parts, contains materials and lessons for parts 1 and 3. Part 1 asks students to think about what they already know about the topics they are going to study and then to think through what it is that they want/need to know. It introduces the geography of the Middle East along with a general historical background and an introduction to Judaism and Islam. It aims to help students understand some of the strong passions and beliefs that surround Israel/Palestine and Jerusalem by connecting it to their own experiences. Part 2 is a survey of Judaism and Islam. Part 3 is the culminating project or "exhibition" for the unit. The unit incorporates a wide range of activities to give students practice in a variety of skills, as well as to help reach students with a variety of learning styles and abilities. Activities include geography and work with maps, brainstorming, creative writing, analysis, and personal writing; there is also a mix of individual, small group, and whole class activities. (Contains an 11-item bibliography.) (BT)

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ED 437 300

Culture and Conflict in the Middle East: Whose Jerusalem?

A high school curriculum

SO 030 771

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New York City
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CULTURE AND CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST: WHOSE JERUSALEM?

This curriculum is focused mostly on providing an original framework of ideas for teachers interested in teaching about both the historical and current cultures and conflicts of the Middle East. While it is set up to include a more traditional section where both the religious and historical background of Judaism and Islam are studied, the major focus is on an introduction and culminating project which approaches the topic from a more unusual angle.

The final project for this curriculum is for students to hold a "summit conference" at which the future of Jerusalem will be decided. In order for students to do this - to understand who the "players" are in this conflict, and all of the historical, religious, and cultural issues at stake, they need to have a thorough and complex understanding of Middle Eastern history, the beliefs of the 3 major religions in the region, and the cultural background of both the Israeli and Palestinian communities.

The aim of the curriculum is to engage students in a project that deals with a real-world issue, and asks them to work as active learners and problem solvers. By encouraging them to USE historical, geographical, religious and moral knowledge, it hopefully empowers them to see history as dynamic and complex, and "regular people" and themselves as actors in historical and political and decision making.

The curriculum is envisioned in three parts - materials and lessons are provided here for Parts I and III.

Part I asks students to think about what they already know about the topics they are going to study, and to then think through what it is that they want and need to know. It then introduces the geography of the Middle East, and gives some general historical background and introduction to Judaism and Islam. It also attempts to help students to understand some of the strong passions and beliefs that surround Israel/Palestine and Jerusalem by connecting it to their own homes and experiences.

Part II is a survey of Judaism and Islam, both the major ideas of these two religions, and the history of the two in the region. It should also include a short explanation of the role of Christianity in

the Middle East. Because such a wealth of curriculum materials on these topics already exists elsewhere and is easily available to most teachers, it has not been included here.

Part III is a culminating project or "exhibition" for the unit, where students have the chance to exhibit what they have learned about these complex issues, as well as to take an active and creative role in problem solving.

The curriculum attempts to incorporate a wide range of activities, in order to give students practice in a variety of skills, as well as to help reach students who bring a variety of learning styles and abilities. Activities include geography and work with maps, brainstorming, creative writing, analysis, personal writing, among others. There is also a mix of individual, small group, and whole class activities, in order to create a varied and interesting classroom. Rather than outlining every single lesson, homework assignment and resource, it gives a broad picture of a possible approach to teaching about this topic, providing a framework within which to touch on many issues, ideas and histories.

In order for this curriculum to work well, teachers will need to work beforehand to find appropriate curriculum materials for their students that cover the topics and issues; e.g., maps, short literary and historical readings, newspaper articles. They will also need to be flexible in creating interesting homework and other in-class assignments that fit with the ways that lessons are going, and are appropriate for their students' level.

The curriculum presumes that classes are approximately 50 minutes to an hour, and meet 5 times a week.

Part I

WEEK 1

Day 1:

1) Individually, have students brainstorm on paper - what do they know about the Middle East? Have them list the names of countries they know, important religious sites, historical events, geographical information (e.g. deserts, bodies of water, etc.). Then have them write 3 questions that they have about the Middle East.

2) In small groups of 3 to 4 students, have students pool both their information and questions, to come up with 2 posters (give each group poster paper) - What We Know About the Middle East and What We Want to Know About the Middle East

3) Groups present their posters to the class. On the board, the teacher should write up any information that people agree on (and, of course, that is correct!) Students should then copy down this information for their notes. As a class, answer as many questions as you can by sharing students' knowledge. Then draw up a class list of major questions that need to be investigated.

Day 2:

1) Have students work in their same groups to find answers to the questions generated yesterday. Each group should take one question to answer.

The teacher may wish to take students to the library, or be sure that encyclopedias, textbooks, and other resources with the necessary information are available.

This will probably take most of the period to do. Tell students that they will be expected to present the information they have found on the following day.

Day 3:

1) Groups present to the class
Other students ask questions to clarify the information
All students should take notes to add to their notebook.
2) If this hasn't come up as one of the research questions, outline what countries are considered part of the "Middle East". Teachers

may also want to give a brief historical explanation of why this area is called that.

Day 4:
1) Hand out a blank map of the Middle East and have students fill out as much as they can on their own.
2) Then give students atlases, and have them fill out the rest of the map.

Give students colored pencils or markers, so that they can create a neat and colorful map for their notebooks which will act as a resource for the rest of the unit.

Day 5:
1) In an atlas, look at a topographical map of the Middle East. Teach students how to read this type of map (e.g. blue is water, green is forest, yellow is desert, etc.) and how to use a map key.
2) Make up a worksheet of questions about the topographical map of the Middle EAst, being sure to have students notice particularly where there is water, and where there is desert. Ask them what kind of issues or problems might be exist in the region, based on the topo maps?

WEEK 2

Day 6:
1)Put students in groups, giving each group both a topographical and political map of the region.

Drawing from the previous activity, ask students to make some predictions about how topography would affect politics in the area. Some possible issues (teachers may or may not want to suggest these to students):
-water
-ports
-oil
-other natural resources of the region
- location between continents
-weather, seasons
-- What do they think will be the major issues in the region?
-- What countries do they predict will be rich/poor, strong/weak?
2) Have groups present their predictions.

Day 7

1) As a class or individually, have students do a short reading about how this land has been fought over, and been the home to many different people over the last 10 centuries.

(Israel, p. 14 - 18)

2) As a whole class, discuss the importance of culture/identity/ nationality as a historical/political force. Along with geographical features, this is going to be a critical influencing factor in the region. Pose the question of how people feel about their "homes".

3) Read ch. 1 in The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros, which talks about the author's home and her feelings about it.

Day 8:

1) Have students write short autobiographical pieces about their own homes. Ask them to describe it, as well as to answer the question of what makes it "home"?

2) Have students read their pieces out loud to the class

3) In a whole class discussion, have students generate a definition of "home" and what makes something a "home". Is it different than a house? What makes a place *feel* like a "home"?

Some of the issues that may/should come up are: places that that family lives, that one has a history in, that have physical reflections of identity

Have students write down the definition of home that you generate.

Day 9

1) Have students read 3-4 stories from Children of Israel, Children of Palestine: Our Own True Stories which discuss children's feelings about Israel/Palestine as their home. This can be done either individually or in groups.

2) Give students questions to answer after they finish reading

3) Discuss the readings as a whole class: some of the conflicts about whose "home" this is should become clear.

Day 10

1) Using an atlas, have students find and mark Jerusalem on their map of the Middle East.

2) As a class, brainstorm a list on the board of everything they know about Jerusalem.

3) Read Jerusalem - A City of 70 Names and Jerusalem - "The Center of the World" (Whose Jerusalem, p. 13 - 17)
4) Next, have students look at 6 different pictorial representations of Jerusalem from different historical periods, with accompanying captions. (Whose Jerusalem, p. 251 - 261). Also, make up a worksheet with the following quotes about Jerusalem:

- "Ten measures of beauty were bestowed upon the world; nine were taken by Jerusalem, and one by the rest of the world" (Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Kiddushin, 49:2)
- " A phone call from Jerusalem to Heaven is a local call, not charged as long distance". (Menachem Begin)
- A lofty column in the middle of the city which at the summer solstice casts no shadow which demonstrates that Jerusalem is the center of the world... called the Navel of the Earth" (French Bishop Arculf, 670 CE)
- " All the winds of the world come and blow throught Jerusalem. It is said that every wind, before going where it wishes to go, first comes to bow down to God in Jerusalem..." (Rabbi Obadia of Bertinoro, 1488)

compare/contrast
5) Discuss what they can tell about Jerusalem, what it is like and how people feel about it, from the reading, pictures and quotes.

WEEK 3

Day 11
1) Read selections from 3 chapters in Whose Jerusalem:
- Jerusalem, the Cradle of Christianity
- How Jerusalem became Al Quds
- Jerusalem - The Heart of Judaism

Give students questions to answer as they read these selections
2) Discuss readings, and the varied ties to/claims on the city
3) Introduce the idea that, today, there are two major groups who claim Jerusalem as their capital: Palestinians and Jews.

In order to understand their conflict, the class will need to look back in history and understand the history and religion of both groups, and the nature of their tie to the city and the land of Palestine/Israel.

Days 12 and 13
Read about the early history of the land of Israel/Palestine, under Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Arab rule. This is a short overview, to give students a general historical background within which to place

what they will be studying. (Suggested reading: Arabs and Israel for Beginners: pg. 43 - 68) Teachers should give students guiding questions to help them understand and make sense of the reading.

Days 14-18

Have students work in small groups to do a small study of either Jewish or Muslim history and religion. Split the class in two, so that half the groups are working on Islam, and half on Judaism. This is obviously a large topic, so groups should focus on creating the following things: (Try to split it up so that there is one group working on each project, for each religion):

- A simulation of the sabbath day in that religion: what day is it, what would people be doing, what can't they do, what do they read, etc.
- A poster of 10 accomplishments from the "golden ages" of the religion
- A timeline of important events in the religion
- 3 historical maps from 3 different time periods
- A presentation of poetry, or excerpts of literary work, with explanation/interpretation

Days 19 and 20:

Group presentations

All students should take notes on presentations!!!!!!

Part II

Teachers may spend as much time as they want or have to give students a more in-depth background in the history and religious beliefs of Judaism and Islam. What should be kept in mind is what information students will need to make a thoughtful and informed decision at the "summit conference" on the future of Jerusalem.

Some suggestions:

Jewish history:

- Torah as books of law
- Shabbat
- holy places
- the early history of Judaism in the land of Israel
- the Diaspora, and fact that since then Jews have been spread all over the world. Highlighting of several periods and places where they flourished, and others where they were discriminated against or expelled
- the Holocaust
- the establishment of the state of Israel

Muslim history:

- Muhammad's life
- the Koran
- holy places
- the spread of Islam during and after Muhammad
- the golden age of Islam
- Islam's decline, including World War I and the end of the Turkish empire
- Palestinian presence in Palestine since the 1880s

Christian history:

- the life of Jesus
- the growth and spread of Christianity
- the Byzantine empire

- the Crusades

Part III

Day 1
1) Read 2 more stories from Children of Israel, Children of Palestine (one from each culture).
2) Ask students to write a personal response to these stories, now that they have studied much more about the history and culture of both.
3) Have students read their responses to the class, and discuss.

Day 2
1) Read two chapters from The Yellow Wind: ch.1 "A Man is Like a Stalk of Wheat (p. 5 - 16) and ch. 4 "Don't Pity them Too Much" (p. 24 - 52) (You may want to assign these for homework the previous night).
2) Discuss how these two "sides" feel about each other.

Day 3
1) In groups, have students read The Arab/Israeli Conflict, a children's book about this issue. It's short (46 pages) with big print, and gives a good, quick overview of the conflict in the Middle East since 1948.
2) Have the students take notes on the book, in their groups.

Day 4
1) Look at historical maps of Israel from 1930 - present
- pre WWII
- 1948
- 1967
- 1984
- present maps - one from Israel, and one from Jordan

2) Discuss the events that shaped this changing map. This may be the place to give a short lecture, that students should take notes on, discussing the various wars between Israelis and Arabs: 1948, 1967, 1973, the intifada.

Day 5
1) Read excerpts from chapters 13 (The Fault Line, p. 322 - 365) and 14 (The Earthquake, p. 366 - 424) in From Beirut to Jerusalem.

These chapters cover the growth of Palestinian resistance and the beginning of the intifada.

Day 6
1) Read the introduction (p. 3 - 16) of Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land . These give a good background to feelings on both sides of the conflict, as well as focuses on Jerusalem, which is what students are going to be asked to make concrete decisions about.

Day 7
1) Read newspaper articles from 1993 about "the handshake". Discuss what the Oslo accords were, the process by which they were arrived at.
2) Read "The PLO's Bargain" in Peace and Its Discontents (p. 3 - 6). This is Palestinian Edward Said's reflection on the Oslo accords.
3) For homework, have students read two chapters in In the Land of Israel: "Just a peace" (p. 77 - 84) and "An Argument on Life and Death" (p. 127 - 153) and write responses to these

Day 8
Students are now ready to begin their planning for the "summit conference".
1) Hand out the exhibition sheet, explaining what they will be doing for this project, and what the requirements are. (See attached)
2) Students should be divided into groups, and begin looking over their notes to help them review all of the important information. You may want to create some kind of process and deadlines by which they will come up with a proposal for the future of Jerusalem. On the exhibition, dates have been left open. Suggestion: Give at least 3 - 5 days for groups to put together their proposals, and another 2 - 4 days for the summit itself.

Days 9 -
Prepare for and have summit conference on the future of Jerusalem.

Exhibition: What Should be Done with Jerusalem?

As you know from all of our studies, there has been conflict throughout the ages about who Jerusalem will belong to. As Israelis and Palestinians work towards created some kind of peace in Israel/Palestine, and creating a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish one, one of the major questions is what the status of Jerusalem will be. Will it be the capital of Israel? The capital of Palestine? Will it be divided between the two countries? Or will it belong to neither, and become an international city, presided over and belonging to both?

These are incredibly difficult questions that, even now, if you look at the front pages of the newspaper, loom in the near future. In the next two weeks, you will have the chance to discuss, and then negotiate, some kind of settlement to this problem.

The class will be working in 6 groups of 4: 3 groups will be representing "Palestinians" at the summit conference, and 3 will be representing "Israelis". At the summit, all 6 groups will attempt to come to consensus on a solution for Jerusalem.

<u>Your group must come to the summit with:</u>

- A proposal for what should be done with Jerusalem, explaining in detail how the city will be governed and by whom.
- A detailed map of the city which goes along with this proposal
- 15 - 20 sources of information which will serve as your "evidence" or justification for why you made the decision that you did. These can be drawn from any of the historical, geographical or literary sources that we have used in class, or any other sources that you find.

<u>At the summit:</u>

In order to reach consensus, each of the 3 groups on the Israeli side must first come to agreement among themselves. The 3 groups on the Palestinian side must also come to agreement among themselves. Therefore, the first part of the summit will be 2 separate meetings, to come up with a "Peace Plan" to bring to the table from each side.

Once both sides are ready, "Israelis" and "Palestinians" will each send 3 representatives to the "Peace Conference". These representatives have been empowered to make a treaty about the future of Jerusalem. However, any treaty that they sign must have majority agreement from their constituencies, and therefore they will need to confer with them throughout the process.

Remember!:

Without a settlement, there will continue to be a stalemate and lack of peace in the Middle East which is costing lives and enormous amounts of money to both sides. It is imperative that you find some way to come to an agreement!

Date of initial summit conference:

Date of Peace Conference:

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